



DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR

INFORMATION SERVICE

FISH AND WILDLIFE SERVICE

For Release ON RECEIPT

PLANKING AND BAKING FISH

Some lumber prices are going down--but not, they say, those on hickory, oak, and ash.

Which information, according to a new release from the Fish and Wildlife Service, United States Department of the Interior, leads very logically to the subject of baking--but more especially, planking--fish. For, excepting aluminum (which may also be used), these three woods are best recommended for this epicurean method of preparation--planking.

This modus operandi requires, for family size, a stout, inch-thick plank, usually oval in shape (to fit a platter), about 18 inches long and a foot wide. It may be flat on top or, as is more conventional, carved with a simple tree design, intaglio, to catch the juices in a "well" at the tree base; and perhaps grooved 'round the entire edge, further to catch any juices from the fish or baking stock. If best quality hickory, ash, or Appalachian oak are used, its overall cost should not exceed two dollars, and the plank should last for many years with proper care.

Planking--like baking--may be a method appropriate for fillets, steaks, or fairly thick-fleshed whole fish. In any event, it is a unique and attractive way of serving fish, and advantageous in that the fish may be served on the plank and need not actually be transferred.

The process of planking itself is very simple, as follows:

Put the cold plank into a cold oven and gradually preheat oven and plank to 450 to 500 degrees F. Make a salt solution in the proportion of 2 tbsps. salt to 1 cup cold water. Soak fish in the salt solution for 3 minutes, drain, and thoroughly bursh with the cooking oil. Remove plank from oven, oil it thoroughly and place fish on plank (skin side down), sprinkle with grated onion and return the plank to the top rack of the oven. Cook for 15 to 20 minutes, basting once or twice with the butter-pepper dressing. About 5 minutes before fish is cooked, it may be surrounded with mashed potato and any desired cooked vegetables.

Planked Shad

3 to 4 pound shad
Salt and pepper
1/2 cup melted butter

2 cups hot mashed
potatoes
Parsley and lemon

Clean and dress fish. Broil for 10 minutes and then place on a buttered plank, skin side down, season well, pour melted butter over top and bake in hot oven (400 degrees F.) 15 minutes. Heat plank before placing fish on it. Protect plank from scorching by coating with damp salt, portions not covered by fish. The salt dries and is easily removed before potato is added. Remove from oven and place mashed potatoes pressed through a pastry bag around the fish. Return to oven until potatoes are brown and fish well done. Garnish with parsley and lemon slices. Serves 6 to 8. (U.S. Regional Cook Book.)

This is the recipe for Planked Swordfish as served at the dinner given by the Fishery Advisory Committee at the Mayflower Hotel in Washington, D. C.

Take a piece of well-seasoned oak, 24 inches long, 18 inches wide, and 3 inches thick, grooved around the edge, and with several grooves cut down the surface, to hold in juices. Put this in a cold oven, gradually pre-heating plank and oven to 450 or 500 degrees F. Make a salt solution in the proportion of 2 tbsps. salt to 1 cup water. Take a slice of swordfish about 3/4 of an inch in thickness, scrape the surface of the flesh with a knife blade, soak the fish in the salt

solution for three minutes, drain and brush with cooking oil (any vegetable oil used for cooking). Remove plank from oven, oil it thoroughly, and place swordfish on plank. Then place it in oven and bake for 30 minutes, basting once or twice with a sauce of 4 tbsps. of melted butter, containing 1/4 tsp. of pepper. About 5 minutes before end of the cooking period remove and garnish with mashed potato piped into attractive designs and any cooked vegetables desired. A substitute garnish often favored is simply thin lemon slices with parsley.

Akin to planking, and not too different as a method, is baking. Probably the finest way of baking fish is that known as the Spencer Hot Oven method, originated and perfected by the late Mrs. Evalene Spencer who, before her death, was a member of the laboratory staff of the U.S. Bureau of Fisheries.

One rather definite thing to be mentioned at the outset regarding this Spencer plan of baking is that perhaps more than any other method of baking fish, the full flavor of the fish is maintained, the cooking odors are minimized and the baking pan can be more easily cleaned. Directions, however, should be followed exactly.

2 lbs. fillets or steaks
1 cup milk
1 tbsp. salt

Finely sifted bread crumbs
Cooking oil or melted fat

Cut the fillets into portions, 3 to the pound, and place on the extreme left hand. Next a bowl containing the heavily salted milk. Then a pan containing the finely sifted bread crumbs. Lastly an oiled baking pan for the cooking and a cup containing oil or melted fat, with a pastry brush or swab.

With the left hand put a piece of fish into the bowl of milk, then toss it into the pan of crumbs. Now, with the right hand cover the fish with crumbs and place in the baking pan. Keep the left hand for the wet work and the right hand for the dry work. In this way the crumbs can be all used without becoming dampened, which would happen at once if the hands were interchanged.

With the portions of fish laid side by side in the pan, sprinkle each with a little oil or melted fat from the brush or swab. This is the only fat used in the cooking. It is well to know that the same results are not obtained if the fish is rolled in flour, cornmeal, or cracker crumbs, for there is no immersion of fat to brown the covering as in deep fat frying. It will be found that any of these other mediums will be browned only in splotches wherever the fat has touched them, while the bread crumbs, with the addition of a little oil or fat, will be uniformly browned.

The next requirement is a very hot oven, 500 to 600 degrees F., at which temperature the fish will be cooked in 10 minutes. Do not be afraid of burning it and never add any water to fish cooked in this quick-oven way. If the heat has been sufficient, when the fish is taken from the oven the pan will be quite dry underneath the fish; each piece will be beautifully browned on all sides and may be easily removed to a hot platter, with the aid of a pancake turner, unbroken and perfect.

A variation of the above is to use very thin strips of bacon instead of cooking oil on the fish.

Either fat or lean fish may be used for baking whole. The former, however, are preferred by many housewives as they require less care. Lean fish should be slashed through the skin in several places, since there is less shrinkage of the flesh. Remove back bone. Sauces may be served with the fish as desired. Given below is a general recipe.

4-lb. fish, cleaned and trimmed but not split	Cooking oil
4 strips of bacon	Salt
Prepare stuffing from the following:	
1 qt. bread crumbs	3/8 tsp. black pepper
2 Tbsps. finely chopped onion	3/4 cup cooked celery, finely chopped
2 tsps. finely crushed sage leaves	4 tbsps. hot celery liquid
3/4 tsp. salt	6 tbsps. hot melted butter
Mix the salt and pepper into the liquids and then stir in the celery.	

Pour this mixture slowly over the bread with which the sage and onion has been mixed, with stirring, so as to moisten it thoroughly. Cover for a few minutes.

Dip the fish into a solution made in the proportion of 2 tbsps. salt to 1 cup cold water. Allow it to stand 5 minutes. Drain fish, slit the skin in several places and brush with cooking oil. Lay 2 strips of bacon in the greased baking pan. Stuff the fish, tie with string to hold in stuffing, and place it on the strips of bacon. Lay 2 strips of bacon on the fish. Place in the center of the oven and bake for 10 minutes at 500 degrees F. Then lower the temperature to 400 degrees F. and bake 8 to 10 minutes longer.

Down in Florida where the red snapper is considered the "quality" fish of the South, this is a favorite recipe:

Baked Red Snapper

1 lb. cooked shrimp
1 egg
1 cup cream
1 cup sherry

1 boned Red Snapper
1/2 tbsp. Anchovy paste
Pepper, salt, paprika
to taste

Take a red snapper weighing about 5 lbs. Remove the head, scales and clean well and remove the backbone. Wash, drain and rub with salt. Put shrimp through grinder. Beat egg and one half cream together. Mix shrimp and anchovy paste, seasoning with pepper, salt and paprika, then stir into the beaten egg and cream, adding sherry and mixing to a smooth paste. Place stuffing inside fish and sew together with twine. Place in baking dish, pouring over it the remaining half cup of cream. Bake in a moderate oven until done (about 4 hours). Serve garnished with sliced cucumbers in French dressing.

Species which are best baked, or planked, include albacore, barracuda, black drum, bluefish, bonito, burbot, carp, cusk, drumfish, grouper, hake, lake trout, lingcod, red drum, sablefish, salmon, sculpin, shad, snappers, tarpon, tilefish, tuna, turbot, and whitefish.

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